

BLUES HOLD UP FOUR PLACE IN LEAGUE



Steve Perrin (left) rises high above the Margate defence to head for goal during the first half of Saturday's Cup tie at Loakes Park.



Margate centre forward Carl Gilbert feels the weight of Alan Phillips' boot on his back during one of the many corners won by Wycombe Wanderers on Saturday.

THE width of a goalpost saved Wycombe Wanderers from a trip down to Margate in Saturday's pulsating F.A. Cup Fourth Qualifying Round encounter at Loakes Park.

And had Norman Fusco's 30 yard effort gone an inch to the right instead of thumping the upright, I wouldn't have fancied Wycombe Wanderers' chances in the replay at Hartdown. Margate, by far the most physical side the Blues have met this season, would have been a stiff proposition on their own ground.

But the question of a replay should never have entered the minds of the 3,000 strong crowd, for the match ought to have been decided after 45 minutes. Only once this season (against Hendon), have we seen Wanderers so dominant in the first half of a game. They outplayed their Southern League opponents to such an extent that Margate were distinctly rattled every time Wycombe were in possession. Chance after chance was created as the visitors struggled to get into the game.

Their only answer to the pressure was to foul. Time after time referee D. Smith blew free kicks which must have numbered about 20-30 in the first half. Offender in chief was centre half Steve Breach. From the first aerial duel with Keith Searle, Breach was up against it and after a series of warnings he was eventually booked. Still Breach fouled, upsetting and pressuring his own teammates, until eventually he had to be replaced by substitute Ray Summers in the 38th minute. Had Breach not been substituted, there was no doubt in my mind that he would have been sent off for continual fouling.

It must be a long time since a player has been taken off to prevent his own dismissal and it demonstrated just how severe the pressure was on Margate. Not that Breach was the only culprit. Full backs Dennis Butler and Alan Butterfield also dished out some stick to the Wycombe front runners. Butler eventually joining Breach in the book. If this was an example of Southern League soccer, Wanderers are far better off in the Rothmans Isthmian League.

Breach's amazing behaviour could not overshadow a superb first half display by Wanderers, however. They tore their opponents to pieces and their performance was reminiscent of their 5-0 victory over Kettering a few years back.

The only reason Margate were allowed to get back into the game was due to a goal gifted to them by the home defence in the last few minutes of the first half. A series of errors inside the box saw them pull back to 1-2 and after the interval they looked a different outfit.

The goal meant that Wanderers had to endure a hectic second half in which there were a number of scores, purely because they did not ram home their clear superiority in the early stages.

At first though, it seemed Wycombe would have this game sewn up by the break. Wearing a new light blue strip, they piled into Margate with Searle twice

bringing 'keeper Steve Bowtell into action. After eight minutes Bowtell plucked a fierce cross-shot from Perrin out of the air and as Breach and Co. began to lose their heads, Wanderers took the lead with an all-important early goal.

The move that brought the breakthrough was one of the best this season. Tony Horseman, Perrin, Searle and Howard Kennedy all exchanged

bringing 'keeper Steve Bowtell into action. After eight minutes Bowtell plucked a fierce cross-shot from Perrin out of the air and as Breach and Co. began to lose their heads, Wanderers took the lead with an all-important early goal.

The move that brought the breakthrough was one of the best this season. Tony Horseman, Perrin, Searle and Howard Kennedy all exchanged

Wycombe Wanderers 2, Margate 1 Report by STUART EARP

passes before Searle finally alighted the ball inside to Wycombe's top goalscorer, who coolly beat Bowtell from eight yards. Kennedy's placing the shot was precise and with this goal before them at the end of the season, he is fast becoming one of the most effective goalscorers in the first half of a game.

Two minutes later Mick Hollifield hit the side netting after a Terry Reardon drive had been blocked. So concerned with resisting this Wycombe barrage, Margate could do little right. The ball was thumped anywhere and their front runners were seldom given a chance to shine. One man, however, managed to stand out amongst the Margate gloom—winger Bruce Walker. Given too much time and space by full back Paul Birdseye, Walker was to play an important role in the visitors' second half revival.

A couple of long range efforts from Reardon, who managed to overcome his mid-week bout of 'flu, kept the Margate defence on the rack and only Bowtell's firm catching of the ball kept the coastal club from going further behind. After Breach was booked in the 29th minute, Perrin forced another diving save from the 'keeper and in Margate's defence cranked again four minutes later.

Perrin, despite a bad foul by Breach, managed to slip the ball to Hollifield on the left. Mick ran on and thrashed in another shot which Bowtell could only parry across the face of the goal. The oncoming Tony Horseman wasted no time in slotting home the loose ball. A word of praise should be given to the referee for he allowed advantage when Perrin was fouled and his decision brought it his full reward for Wycombe.

Still Wanderers stormed forward and their full reward that second goal came the game's major turning point. Once again Hollifield's pace took him clear of two defenders and having drawn out Bowtell he crossed into the middle. Kennedy met the ball first time and clipped a shot straight towards the net. Colin Clewlow, however, just happened to be there at the right time to get his head to the ball and deflect away a certain goal.

A third score they would have ended the match as a contest, I am sure. Margate, whose heads were already going down at the time, scarcely looked good enough to cut back a three goal deficit.

Just after Kennedy's 30 yard free kick had been tipped away for the umpteenth time, the Margate management took the sensible decision to replace

virtually redundant and it was probably his inactivity that brought the Margate goal. John should not shoulder all the blame, however, for the defence had two or three opportunities to clear the ball from their half before Maskell dived to collect the ball, failed to hold onto it and gave Carl Gilbert the chance to slot home.

The effect of the score was obvious. Wycombe sagged significantly and were glad to hold out for the remaining four minutes of the half. Margate now had fresh hope.

The change in the pattern of the second half was predictable. Margate came out with a new cause, gone was the first half bickering and swearing. Now the players were urging each other on, praising each other's efforts and looking much more like a side near the top of the Southern League. Wycombe, with the wind taken right out of their sails, suddenly became shaky at the back, exposed in midfield and disorganised up front. It was obviously going to be Margate's half. The question was, could Wanderers hold out?

Forty-seven minutes later we had the answer but during those minutes there were many anxious moments for both sides. At first Margate threw all they had at the home side and held their grip for almost half an hour. Then Wycombe started to believe in themselves again, came streaming back and finished the match in the driving rain.

Margate, sensing they had a chance in winning the game, played to their number 11 from the second half whistle. Hugging the touchline, Walker was again given all the time in the world to bring over left foot crosses which had the home defence in a good deal of trouble. It was fortunate the rest of the Margate strikers had off days. Gilbert, who once cost Rotherham £18,000, proved an awkward customer for Keith Mead but lacked penetration near goal while the bearded Barry Brown seldom threatened and wasted his one and only chance in the game.

As Margate came forward they began to discover massive gaps in midfield. With Hollifield marking Eddie Clayton the ex-Spurs first teamer, Kennedy and Reardon could not cope with the enthusiasm Margate generated and Wycombe themselves began to commit fouls. From one free kick Maskell saved well from Fusco (Kettering) and a few minutes later Sawyer's crossing drive from a corner forced the 'keeper to gather at the second attempt.

Amongst this Margate dominance there were a few Wycombe raids which almost brought goals, like in the 60th

minute when Bowtell held onto a rising drive from Kennedy. Four minutes later Alan Phillips broke through from midfield and laid a superb through ball to Horseman's feet but after drawing a defender and slipping the ball to Perrin, the latter miscued his shot hopelessly wide.

As Margate began to tire, however, Wanderers at last hauled themselves back into the game again, forcing four corners inside two minutes. From one of those flag kicks, Horseman wasted the best chance of the half. Searle, receiving the ball at the near post, flicked the ball over the goalkeeper to Horseman, 10 yards out. Although two defenders were on the line, "Bodger" would normally have put this chance away with ease. This time he sliced the ball nearer the corner flag than the goal.

Kennedy blasted Perrin's pass over the top after 74 minutes, two minutes later Bowtell saved a full blooded Horseman effort and then Kennedy teased two defenders before showing just past the post. In between those Wycombe's efforts, Brown drove wide at the other end when Wycombe's yards out were caught too square.

Amidst all this excitement Butler was booked for scything down Horseman in the 77th minute. Then Perrin latched on Butler's weak back-pass and hit the side netting but the closest effort of the half came from Margate.

Breaking out of defence, Fusco was allowed to run straight at the defence for 20 yards or more. He even had time to look up and place his shot which flew over Maskell's despairing dive but thumped against the upright and was hastily cleared.

That was with five minutes left and there were some mightily relieved faces in the Wycombe crowd when Mr. Smith finally brought this excellent Cup tie to its close.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, G. Hand, H. Kennedy, T. Reardon, S. Bowtell, A. Horseman, K. Searle, S. Perrin, Sub D. Evans (not used).

MARGATE: S. Bowtell, D. Butler, D. Sawyer, B. Brown, R. Brown, 38 mins, A. Butterfield, C. Clewlow, E. Knight, N. Fusco, B. Brown, C. Gilbert, S. Walker.

Referee: D. Smith (Hornchurch).

Half time: 2-1. **Goalscorers:** Wycombe: Kennedy (10), Horseman (32). Margate: Gilbert (4).

Official total attendance: 2,876.

ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE

DIVISION ONE										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD		
Enfield	17	14	1	2	34	12	43	8		
Ilford	17	11	2	4	24	15	35	8		
W. Combe	18	9	8	1	28	13	32	16		
Barnet	14	9	2	3	23	15	29	3		
Bishops	17	9	1	7	23	23	28	0		
Dulwich	18	8	3	6	27	22	27	3		
Greenwich	16	8	1	7	25	19	25	6		
Sutton	14	8	1	5	23	16	25	10		
Clapton	15	7	1	7	21	24	23	3		
Barking	17	7	3	7	29	23	24	1		
Waltham	15	6	4	5	25	22	21	20		
Hendon	19	6	4	9	33	31	22	20		
Kingston	16	6	4	6	23	19	21	0		
Woking	15	4	4	7	22	28	16	30		
Slough	16	5	4	7	21	19	18	2		
Oxford	15	5	3	7	19	26	16	30		
Hayes	16	3	4	9	17	30	13	100		
Widow	17	3	3	11	20	38	12	20		
Luton	13	3	2	8	11	19	11	40		
Watford	16	2	4	10	16	30	8	20		
Bromley	16	2	0	14	9	33	6	20		

SATURDAY'S FIXTURES

(K.O. 2.30 p.m. unless stated)

Rothmans Isthmian League, Division 1: Wycombe Wanderers v. Clapton (3 p.m.).

Athenian League, Division 1: Marlow v. Erith & Belvedere (3 p.m.).

Spartan League: Chalfont St. Peter v. Barkhamsted Town (2.45 p.m.). League Cup 1st round: Amersham Town v. Harfield United.

Rothmans Hellenic League, Premier Division: Barnham v. Bicester Town.